

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

SPRING DEVELOPMENT

(No.)

CODE 574

DEFINITION

Collection of water from springs or seeps to provide water for a conservation need.

PURPOSE

Improve the quantity and/or quality of water for livestock, wildlife or other agricultural uses.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

In areas where a spring or seep will provide a dependable supply of suitable water for the planned use.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

An investigation of site conditions shall be made, including:

- Soil borings
- Water quality for the intended purpose
- Water quantity for the intended purpose
- Suitability of the spring location for the intended purpose
- A determination that the producer has the appropriate water rights or permits to develop the spring
- An assessment to determine existing ecological functions and potential losses from the spring development
- A certified wetland determination
- An assessment of the cultural resource associated with the spring

Develop springs by removing obstructions to the flow, collecting the water flow and storing the water, if flow from the spring is not

sufficient to meet the peak demand of the intended use.

Remove obstructions to spring flow such as fine-grained sediments, rock, slope-wash materials and vegetation to allow the spring to flow freely. Design the development of the spring to prevent obstructions from reoccurring.

The type of collection system used for the spring development is dependent upon the type of spring and site geology. Design the collection system to collect sufficient water for the intended purpose of the spring. Collection systems generally consist of a restrictive barrier that forces water to collect in a perforated pipe that flows to an outlet. Include measures in the collection system to prevent sediment from entering the system and/or provisions to trap and remove sediment that does enter the system.

Include a spring box, if necessary, to allow sediment to settle out of the spring flow or to provide storage to meet peak demands on the water from the spring. Locate the spring box to allow water to flow by gravity from the spring to the spring box. Where possible, collect water downstream (150ft.) from the spring source to protect the integrity of the spring. Construct the spring box of a durable material such as concrete, plastic, galvanized steel or naturally rot-resistant wood.

The spring box shall be of sufficient size to provide for the storage of sediment and any required storage of water. The cross-sectional area of the spring box shall be large enough to allow access for periodic cleaning. Provide the spring box with a tight fitting cover to prevent

trash and surface runoff from entering. To prevent freezing,

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or download it from the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

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bury the spring box in the soil.

The spring development shall have an outlet pipe that carries the water to its intended use. Design the outlet pipe according to Pipeline (516). If the outlet is from a spring box, the outlet pipe shall be a minimum of six inches off the floor to allow for sediment collection.

A pump will be needed if gravity will not carry water from the spring to where the water will be used. Base the type and size of the pump upon available power sources and the water delivery needs.

When flow from the spring, whether intermittent or continuous, will exceed the capacity of the collection system, an overflow is required. Spring flow that exceeds the intended use will be left in its historic location and protected from damage.

Where seasonal water is needed for intended purposes, design the system to return full hydrology to the historic spring source during non-seasonal use.

Where overflow occurs at the watering facility, design the system to carry the maximum flow expected. Manage the overflow so that it does not create a resource problem. When outlet overflow occurs, utilize the water to enhance or create a wetland habitat similar to the spring source. Protect the overflow and habitat from livestock damage.

Design the spring development so that it is protected from damage by freezing, flooding, livestock, excess sediment, vehicular traffic and water quality contamination. Livestock will be excluded from access to the spring source.

Follow the information in Watering Facility (614) to design facilities to provide access for livestock and wildlife to water from the developed spring.

Regrade areas disturbed by construction of the spring development to keep surface flow out of the spring. Revegetate disturbed areas as soon as possible after construction.

CONSIDERATIONS

A shutoff valve and vent system on the spring outlet pipe should be considered for winter shutdown, flow control and maintenance.

Native vegetation adapted to wet conditions should be considered on wet sites as an alternative to introduced grasses to stabilize areas after construction.

Consider how other conservation practices, properly applied on the spring recharge area, may increase infiltration of precipitation in order to conserve the spring's flows.

Consider how diversion of water from spring developments affects stream flows in the watershed.

Aquatic habitat quality may be conserved when a spring is developed near surface waters or on a floodplain by incorporating a float valve that shuts off flow to the tank, and returns overflow via a stable outlet to the same watershed where it was collected.

Springs may represent islands of unique habitat in the landscape, supporting plant and animal populations that only occur in an area of a high water table. Consider options for developing the spring or seep that preserve the conditions supporting these unique habitats.

Springs are sources of water for fish and wildlife. Maintain fish and wildlife access to water from the spring development where possible.

Brush removal, excavation, clean out and withdrawal of water are manipulations that may affect wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values. However, selective removal of undesirable brush and management for desirable native plants may reduce evaporative losses and conserve biodiversity.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications shall provide details of planned location, materials and construction requirements for the installation of the practice to meet its intended purpose.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The O&M plan shall contain a schedule for the periodic monitoring of the following items:

- Sediment buildup in the spring box
- Clogging of outlet and overflow pipes

- Diversion of surface water from the collection area and spring box
- Erosion from overflow pipes
- Rodent damage

Any problems discovered shall be immediately repaired.

REFERENCES

USDA-NRCS. National Engineering Handbook, Part 650, Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 12, Springs and Wells.

Somers, A.B. et al. The restoration and management of small wetlands of the mountains & Piedmont in the southeast. USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Watershed Science Institute. November 2000.

USDA-NRCS. National Engineering Manual, Part 531, Geology 531.31.

Groundwater & Wells. Fletcher Driscoll, Johnson Division.

USDI-USGS. Basic ground-water hydrology. Water Supply Paper 2220.